The IVORY POACHERS of the LADO ENCLAVE

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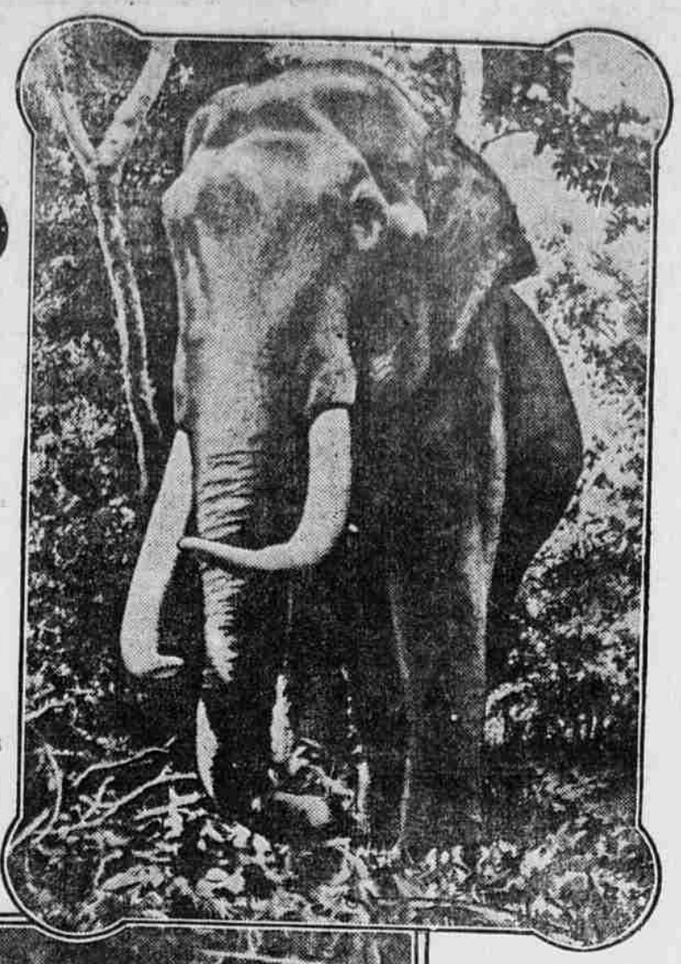

There's a legion that never was 'listed,
That carries no colors or crest,
But, split in a thousand detachments,
Is breaking the road for the rest.
—Kipling.

I WAS trailing ex-President Theodore Roosevelt through Uganda on the last stages of his year's hunting trip in Central Africa, being the only newspaper correspondent to remain in the field out of the small army of them who had set out with him from New York in March, 1909, when my travels took me to the shores of the Albert Nyanza, from which the White Nile obtains its source. Here are the headquarters of the small body of men who are braving all manner of dangers to make a fortune by elephant-hunting in "No Man's Land," as the Lado Enclave territory on the Belgian Congo, bordering on the great River Nile, has been termed.

Many of these men were personally known to me during my residence in British East Africa as a government official. I had acquired a wholesome respect for these hardy and intrepid tamers of the uncivilized sections of the great equatorial hinterland of Central Africa, and what I saw and heard of them at the Albert Nyanza and on the banks of the Nile did not lessen my regard for them as men. Perhaps their calling as elephant-poachers may not have been regular in the eyes of the law, but then there was such an element of danger connected with their work that the offenses of which they were guilty paled before all other considerations, and one is forced to concede to them the possession of the acme of pluck. The freebooter or soldier of fortune is ever a picturesque figure and the Congo poachers amply fill this role.

I had marched one hundred and sixty-five miles across the dreary, swelteringly hot Uganda country, and it was with feelings of extreme relief that I saw the shimmering expanse of the waters of the Albert Nyanza from the rugged hill-tops overlooking Butiaba, the small port on the sandy shore of the lake.

I pitched camp on the site of the recent Roosevelt encampment within one hundred feet of the lake.

I had heard from natives that one of the Congo poachers was in camp at Butiaba, but none of them seemed to know his name and I was at a loss to know who he might be. I remembered that there were a number of men whom I knew intimately poaching in this district, and I wondered whether perchance I was to be given an opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with one of them. Perhaps it might be John Boyes, nicknamed "King of the Kikuyu;" or "Karomoja" Bell, the mightiest of elephant-hunters; the Honorable Rupert Craven, brother of Earl Craven; young Quenfin Grogan, brother of Captain Ewart S. Grogan of Cape-to-Cairo fame; Pickering, a noted elephant-hunter; Bennett, an ex-engineer of the Nile launches; W. Buckley, a partner of Pickering's; or Pearson, to say nothing of many others whom I had met from time to time. I mention them by their correct names, for they made no secret of their calling and I feel sure that I am not committing any indiscretion by so doing.

Each one of these men has a history, and each and every one of them can tell thrilling tales of his experiences not only in the Congo but also in every other part of Africa.

My interested conjectures as to who the man at Butiaba might be were soon set at rest. It is the custom for all white men in Africa to call on any other white man who may camp in their vicinity, and so it was not long before the "poacher" came to my camp to see me. It proved to be Bennett, the ex-engineer of the Uganda Nile fleet, who had abandoned his profssional calling for the more thrilling and lucrative work of shooting elephants for their ivory. For many years he had been in charge of the small steam launch plying between Butiaba and Nimule on the Nile, and during these years he had done much shooting on the banks of the river. His haul of ivory added each year to his small income as a launch engineer, so that it was a bad year indeed when he did not double, nay treble, his paltry salary. He had been with Winston Churchill, when the latter made his trip up the Nile on the government flotilla when inspecting East Africa and Uganda in his official capacity as under secretary of state for the colonies.

This is the story of a man, as told to me on my first night in camp at Butiaba, sitting in my tent beating off the attack of greedy mosquitoes while entertaining Bennett with the aid of my limited supply of whisky. The story was so startling that often I had to pinch myself during its recital to satisfy myself that I was not dreaming of the days of Emin Pasha and Stanley as the result of the association of my surroundings.

I noticed that his hands were badly lacerated, in fact, in a fearful state, and all the time we conversed about generalities I was wondering what had been the cause. Presently the conversation turned to the subject of elephant-shooting, and I asked him how he was progressing with his quest for ivory. I had got him interested now and leaned back in my easy camp-chair to listen.

He said he had just returned from the Congo, where he had been shooting elephants for some months at the back of Mahagi, and that he had been very successful up to a certain point, but then had lost all his hard-gotten ivory and all his effects, owing to an attack from the natives. His subsequent narrative was an enthralling one, and I wish that it were possible for me to reproduce it exactly as he told it to me on that still African night.

"I got on very well with the natives and had got some very fine tusks," he continued. "One day I was out after some elephants, which had been located by the natives for me, and came across four huge tuskers. I fired at the biggest, but only succeeded in mortally wounding it. He charged through the tall elephant grass toward me, with his huge ears outspread and his trunk raised high above his head. He screamed fearfully with rage and pain and the sight was indeed a terrifying one. I fired at point-blank range and again hit him mortally. The elephant continued his charge and one of my native servants failed to get out of his way. The elephant pushed the native to one side with his tusk in passing and the boy fell to the ground without a sound. The elephant fell down dead a short distance away.

"The three remaining elephants were wild with rage and rushed hither and thither, tearing down the trees in all directions as if they had been made of paper, screaming shrilly all the time. It was an anxious moment for me, for I was within fifty feet of them at the time of my first shot. At last they made off across country toward the lake, and I followed them up and succeeded in bagging all three of them in three shots at close range.

"I returned to look for my native servant, thinking that he would be watching over my first tusker. To my astonishment I found the boy lying dead where he had fallen when the elephant bowled him over. I examined him carefully and found that no bones had been fractured, nor was there a mark on his body. He must have died from shock at the terrifying experience.

"On or about December 10th I moved off farther inland after a big herd and camped, leaving my main camp two days behind me. Within a radius of twenty miles of me there were four other white poachers, namely, Pearson, Dickinson, Boyes and Knowles. The natives appeared perfectly friendly to me. On my first night in camp they visited me, dancing and singing round my camp-fire. I suspected no treachery from them; on the contrary they appeared willing to keep me informed of the movements of the elephants and of the Belgian military patrol, which was operating in the district, endeavoring to capture us poachers.

"Next day the same thing happened and I was asked to attend to the leg of one of the tribesmen who had been injured badly in a native brawl. I bathed the wound and was winding a bandage round the wounded leg when I suddenly felt my wrists seized. A rope was quickly cast round my neck, other ropes were fastened round my legs and arms, and I was jerked roughly off the camp-stool on which I was sitting. Then the natives seized my guns, and all my camp equipment was deliberately destroyed before my eyes. A native seized my helmet and insolently paraded before me with it on his own head. I was then beaten savagely across the back of the hands and on the body with sticks. My hands burst open, hurting fearfully, and the sun beat down upon my head with terrific force.

"I was made to march, with my captors jeering at me and subjecting me to awful indignities, for four whole days through the broiling sun until their powerful chief's village was reached. Here the chief came forward and shook me by my wounded and manacled hands, bidding his followers release me. He was a fine-looking old savage, with a very intelligent face, standing over six feet high.

"On the orders of the chief I was offered milk to drink and given a native hut to live in as a prisoner under a strong guard. My food during this time consisted of raw meat and very little of that. After some days of torture, wondering what they intended to do with me, I was haled before the chief and given a public trial. I could understand what they were saying, and it appeared that all, except the chief, were in favor of my death. Fortunately for me, the chief's wishes prevailed and I was released and allowed to return to Mahaga, on my giving a guaranty that I would never again hunt in this district. I was threatened with instant death and torture if I was caught again by them.

"Then began six days' journey through the blazing African sun with all my clothes in rags, no helmet and no hat, no water, and no food except what I could find my the way, which was very little, seeing that I had no rifle. All my camp equipment, stores and rifles had been taken away from me and I had lost all my ivory, the result of many months' arduous work in the Congo.

"At last, after days of infinite torture, I reached the camp of a Belgian official near Mahagi, who clothed and fed me, promising me that the natives would be punished. This was indeed kind of him, for it must be remembered that I was a poacher in the Belgian territory and liable to ten years' imprisonment if captured by the Belgians in the act of poaching ivory. I have came to Butiaba to try to get together another outfit and return to the Mahagi district to replace my losses. I am determined to make up my lost time and feel confident that I can do so."

I wish that I could tell the tale with the unaffected simplicity and nothing-out-of-the-ordinary manner in which Bennett told it to me.

The next day I left by launch for Koba, the first government post on the Nile. Here I found a small village of white elephant-poachers, but all of them were away after ivory in the Congo at the time of my visit. They live on the British side of the Nile and make periodical excursions into the Congo after ivory. The British government allows Congo ivory to pass through its territory on payment of twenty-five per cent custom duty, and in a way this encourages the poachers, for they are allowed to shoot only two, or at most three, elephants each year in East Africa or Uganda, on payment of a $250 license. In the Congo no license is necessary and they may shoot as many tuskers as they can, without a license, if they can evade being captured by the Belgians or the natives.

Each man takes untold risks when he follows this calling. Not only does he chance ten years' imprisonment in a chain-gang in the interior of the Congo, if caught by the Belgians, but he also takes his life in his hands every time he shoots an elephant, for he crawls into a herd through the fifteen or twenty-foot grass, selects the biggest bull and then shoots it at a range of from ten to fifteen yards. No one who has not tried elephant shooting can realize the terrifying aspect of a herd of elephants when you are close to them. They move so silently, and yet each one is capable of crushing the life out of any man who dares disturb their peace.

At Koba I found the houses, made of grass and mud, of John Boyes, the Honorable Rupert Craven, and of Pickering and Buckley. "Karajoma" Bell had given up poaching for the time being, as he had made more than sufficient out of it to satisfy all his desires. Bell is a young Englishman, who has a big estate in England and an annual rent-roll of some $15,000. He came out to Central Africa seeking adventure in 1902, when only eighteen years of age, and at once turned his attention to elephant-hunting.

I am told that in the last eight years Bell has spent $100,000 in seeking ivory and has made $200,000, so that he has cleared one hundred per cent.

John Boyes, alias "King of the Kikuyu," was, unfortunately, poaching in the Congo. I should have liked to renew my acquaintance with him, for he is a remarkable character. Boyes was at one time an able-bodied seaman on a merchant vessel and was wrecked, or deserted, I know not which, at Zanzibar, many years previous to my first meeting with him in 1904. He had spent all his time cattle-trading and ivory-hunting in the wilds, and for many years made the territory of the Akikuyu tribe his headquarters. He had become blood-brother to their king, Kinanjui, and then had made himself virtually their king.

Hardly the Sunday School Brand.

The young hopeful had secreted some bright buttons in his pocket, which came from the motor car show. When Sunday school was well under way, he took one out and pinned it on his coat, feeling it an ornament. Unfortunately, when the minister came round to speak to the dear children, his near sighted eyes were caught by the color.

"Well, Richard, I see you are wearing some motto, my lad. What does it say?"

"You read it, sir," replied Richard, hanging his head.

"But I cannot see. I haven't my glasses, son. Read it so we can all hear you."

Richard blushed. "It says, sir, 'Ain't it —— to be poor?' "—Metropolitan Magazine.

If a woman can find the style of hat she wants, she can always adjust her head to fit it.

The way some women talk is enough to make a bachelor feel bald headed.

The manufacturer of artificial feet is responsible for many a false step.

The woman pugilist knows just how to assert her "rights."

One always thinks there is a lot of money to be made in any kind of business that he isn't in.

Her Special Advantages.

James Fullerton Muirhead in his book, "The Land of Contrasts," tells of an American girl who was patronizingly praised by an Englishman for the purity of her English and who replied: "Well, I had special advantages, inasmuch as an English missionary was stationed near our tribe."

Ruling Spirit Still Strong.

Mrs. J. L. Story, who has just published a volume of reminiscences, tells of a lady relative who had all her life been afraid of damp sheets. When she was dying Mrs. Story entered the room, to find the fireplace barricaded with a large assortment of bed linen. She was having her winding sheet warmed.

"I never have lain in damp bedclothes while I was alive," said the old lady in a feeble whisper, "and I'm not going to do it when I'm dead."

Springs in Their Brains.

Two Frenchmen, in visiting an art galery, stopped to admire a painting by an American. The artist happened to be in the gallery and in broken English one of the Frenchmen asked: "How did monsieur ever catch such a wonderful picture?"

"Oh," replied the artist, with a far-away look, "that painting was an offspring of my brain."

The other Frenchman was greatly interested and asked his friend what that American had said.

"I can hardly explain," whispered the first Frenchman excitedly; "he said ze picture was one spring off of Americans act queerly when they have springs on their brains."

Stern Call of Duty.

Reform is not joyous, but grievous; no single man can reform himself without stern suffering and stern working; how much less can a nation of men!—Carlyle.

Strictly Up to Date.

Alice—How oddly some men propose.

Kate—I should say so. A gentleman asked me last week if I felt favorably disposed to a unification of interests.

With the Lid Off.

"Mother," asked Bob, with a hopeful eye on the peppermint-jar, "have I been a good boy this afternoon?"

"M-m-yes," answered mother, dubiously, recalling a certain little rift within the lute. The four-year-old diplomat looked anxious.

"Please," he begged, "say a wide-open yes!"—Harper's Bazar.

Cheerful Outlook.

"Father, dear," said Amaranth, "Willie Smithers is going to call at your office this morning to ask you for my hand. Isn't there some little hint I can give him before he goes so as to make it easier for him?"

"Yes," said Mr. Blinks, "tell him to take ether before he comes. It will save him much pain."—Harper's Weekly.

Helped a Little.

At Dinard one summer there was a beautiful young countess, the wife of a millionaire, whose bathing dress was —well—

A couple of men about town were talking in shocked tones about the countess' bathing dress on the casino terrace.

"It's shocking; it's most improper," said the first.

"But," said the second, "I can't believe it's any worse than the dinner dress she wore at Mrs. Hughes-Hallet's ball last night."

"Oh, well," said the other, "she had her diamonds on then."—Rochester Evening Telegram.